



NEWS FROM U.S. SENATOR LARRY CRAIG

CHAIRMAN

U.S. SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

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Statement of Chairman Larry Craig

“Assisted Living: Examining the Assisted Living Workgroup Final Report”

Good Morning. Thank you for attending the Senate Special Committee on Aging hearing this morning. Two years ago, this committee held a hearing to gain a better understanding of the emerging industry of assisted living. We learned that there are over 30,000 assisted living facilities, nationwide, housing nearly one million people, and that such facilities are not regulated at the federal level. Instead, individual states are responsible for oversight and are free to govern without federal mandates.

However, we have seen great disparities of care given by assisted living facilities around the country. Facilities in some states are exemplary in providing appropriate, quality care for their residents while in other states such facilities are clearly handling more than they are capable of doing.

Because of the need for uniform guidance in rendering appropriate and competent care, the Special Committee on Aging charged consumer and industry groups within the Assisted Living community to come together and develop recommendations designed to provide uniform models of best practices to ensure more consistent quality in assisted living facilities nationwide and to provide consumers with sufficient and useful information.

In the fall of 2001, the Assisted Living Workgroup (ALW) was formed with nearly 50 member organizations representing providers, consumers, long term care professionals, regulators and accrediting bodies. Our primary directive for this group was to be inclusive and our expectation was that model rules for assisted living care would be achieved. We have discovered differently.

The Committee recognizes that a great deal of time and monumental effort went into this final product. We appreciate that each recommendation was clearly put through a thoughtful, thorough process with the welcoming of divergent views. We commend the ALW on its efforts to provide a comprehensive list of recommendations for assisted living facilities. We also appreciate the efforts to bring about consensus and hope this product will be helpful to consumers and industry, alike.

Having said that, I feel much more needs to be done. This report does not present a uniform set of model rules and regulations for the rendering of health care services in assisted living context. However, it demonstrates the diversity of opinion on what needs to be done. Accordingly, it is a most important and valuable first step in the further study of this important quest for uniform guidance.

Today, we plan to examine the Assisted Living Workgroup Final Report and focus on the process in which the report was developed, the benefits and shortfalls of the report, and how the report can best be used in the future.

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We will hear from industry and consumer groups that were involved within the ALW. Our first witness is Stephen McConnell, Vice President for Public Policy and Advocacy with the Alzheimer's Association. Our next witness is Dan Madsen, President and CEO of Leisure Care, Inc., a member of the American Seniors Housing Association. Both of these witness are members of the ALW and were involved in developing the report.

We will also hear from an outside expert observer who was not involved in the ALW. We hope he can provide us with an objective opinion of the report. Bob Mollica is the Senior Program Director for the National Academy for State Health Policy.

I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here today. This is a most important enterprise and I look forward to hearing your thoughts on how we can make assisted living a better alternative for our seniors.

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